

# **ST. STEPHENS/OXFORD SMALL AREA PLAN**

## **PLAN RECOMMENDATIONS BEING CONSIDERED AT BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS PUBLIC HEARING**

Following are the complete recommendations from the St. Stephens/Oxford Small Area Plan identified by issue. Maps referred to are available for viewing on the County's web page at:

[http://www.catawbacountync.gov/depts/planning/small\\_area/sstephens/](http://www.catawbacountync.gov/depts/planning/small_area/sstephens/)  
or the Planning Department.

### **SECTION I: LAND USE AND COMMUNITY DESIGN**

#### **Guiding Principles**

- P-1 Maintain a rural, uncongested setting.
- P-2 Provide a regional fair-share of affordable housing.
- P-3 Encourage subdivisions to build community atmosphere and a sense of place through design.
- P-4 Discourage the accumulation of unnecessary materials/vehicles in residential areas, on public rights-of-way and near the river.
- P-5 Continue to allow a diversified range of businesses.
- P-6 Require more aesthetically pleasing commercial development designs.
- P-7 Balance additional growth in commercial services with the preservation of rural atmosphere.
- P-8 Maintain a scale and design for office-institutional buildings that blend with the surrounding area.
- P-9 Encourage Office-Institutional growth.
- P-10 Control industrial growth in restricted zones.
- P-11 Protect natural features (i.e. trees, lake, fields) that contribute to the rural atmosphere.
- P-12 Encourage farmland preservation.

#### **Recommendations**

- LU-1 Designate an area for higher density residential uses, as shown on Map 5, *St. Stephens/Oxford SAP Proposed Density Districts*.
- LU-2 Higher-density development should adhere to the following design concepts:
  - .1 Cluster development option is available;
  - .2 Single-family homes should be developed at a maximum density of 2 units per acre if public water is not available and 3 units per acre if public water is available;
  - .3 5 percent of a major subdivision should be set aside for open space.
- LU-3 Designate an area for medium density residential uses, as shown on Map 5.

- LU-4 Medium-density development should adhere to the following design concepts:
- .1 Cluster development option is available;
  - .2 Single-family homes should be developed at a maximum density of 1.34 units per acre;
  - .3 7.5 percent of a major subdivision should be set aside for open space.
- LU-5 Designate an area for lower-density residential uses, as shown on Map 5.
- LU-6 Lower-density development should adhere to the following design concepts:
- .1 Cluster development option is available;
  - .2 Single-family homes should be developed at a maximum density of 1 unit per acre;
  - .3 10 percent of a major subdivision should be set aside for open space.
- LU-7 Designate an area within 435 feet from the Catawba River as the Catawba River Corridor, as shown on Map 6, *St. Stephens/Oxford Future Land Use Recommendations*.
- LU-8 Development in the Catawba River Corridor should adhere to the following design concepts:
- .1 Cluster development option is available; however, no single lot should be less than 0.75 acres;
  - .2 Single-family homes should be developed at a maximum density of 1 unit per acre;
  - .3 Any water front lot should have a minimum width of 100 feet.
- LU-9 Multi-family development should be limited to the areas designated as mixed-use village development as shown on Map 6.
- LU-10 Multi-family development should also be limited to sites where both public water and sewer are available.
- LU-11 Setbacks should be increased and driveway cuts limited for residential developments along NC Hwy. 16, Springs Road, Oxford School Road and County Home Road to protect right-of-way for future road expansion.
- LU-12 Require a minimum number of trees on each housing space of manufactured home parks.
- LU-13 Residential subdivisions should incorporate the following additional design criteria:
- .1 landscaping/buffering;
  - .2 subdivision signs;
  - .3 sidewalks – as defined under pedestrian systems in the Transportation section of this plan;
  - .4 tree ordinance;

- .5 internal access;
  - .6 cluster subdivisions should be available as an option to conventional subdivisions.
- LU-14 To protect property values, appearance and character of the community, the area within Catawba River Corridor should be assigned a zoning classification of R-1. Construction of “stick built” homes has been the trend along the Catawba River Corridor and the zoning should reflect that trend.
- LU-15 Increase enforcement of the Catawba County junk ordinance.
- LU-16 Setbacks should be increased and driveway cuts limited for commercial developments along NC Hwy. 16, Springs Road, Oxford School Road and County Home Road in order to protect right-of-way for future road expansion.
- LU-17 Commercial uses should adhere to additional appearance criteria, similar to the current US Hwy. 321 guidelines, including:
- .1 the option of either placing parking in the rear of the building with less landscaping required or placing parking in the front of the building and incorporating additional landscaping;
  - .2 stronger signage regulations;
  - .3 required access management;
  - .4 incorporation of Conover’s landscaping requirements;
  - .5 buffering from residential uses.
- LU-18 The following nodes should be designated Rural Commercial with a maximum total area of 10 acres per node and a maximum gross leasable area of 15,000 square feet per lot:
- .1 Lee Cline Road and Houston Mill Road;
  - .2 NC Hwy. 16 and St. Peters Church Road\*;
  - .3 NC Hwy. 16 and Springs Road\*;
  - .4 NC Hwy. 16 and Swinging Bridge Road\*;
  - .5 Oxford School Road and Riverbend Road (see Map 6).
- \* Re-examination of these areas should occur within 5 years to determine if a Neighborhood Commercial designation is warranted.*
- LU-19 The following nodes should be designated Neighborhood Commercial with a total area of 10 to 25 acres per node and maximum gross leasable area of 50,000 square feet per lot:
- .1 St. Peters Church Road and Springs Road (see Map 6).
- LU-20 The following area should be designated as a Commercial Corridor with additional standards that limit driveway cuts, require additional landscaping along road frontage and in parking lots and limit the number, location and height of signs:

- .1 Springs Road from County Home Road west to the study area boundary (see Map 6).
- LU-21 The following area should be designated as a Community Center with a total area of 20 to 40 acres per node and maximum gross leasable area of 100,000 square feet per lot. Businesses in this area should buffer structures and parking from I-40.
  - .1 The interchange at I-40 and Oxford School Road (see Map 6).
- LU-22 The following areas should be designated as mixed-use:
  - .1 South of St. John's Church Road to the study area boundary and east to Rock Barn Road should permit a mixed-use village type development;
  - .2 South of Rock Barn Road to the study area boundary should permit a mix of neighborhood business and office-institutional uses (see Map 6).
- LU-23 Billboards should be limited to the Interstate 40 corridor. The use of logo signs on Interstate 40 should be encouraged.
- LU-24 The following area should be designated for office-institutional uses with a total area of 5 to 10 acres for the node:
  - .1 NC Hwy. 16 and C&B Farm Road (see Map 6).
- LU-25 Zone for industrial areas in park-like settings with the option to mix with high-impact commercial uses.
- LU-26 The following areas should be designated for industrial uses:
  - .1 South of Oxford School Road to I-40. Buildings and parking in this area should be buffered from I-40 (see Map 6);
  - .2 South of Interstate 40 and north of US Highway 70 between Rock Barn Road and North Oxford Street (see Map 6).
- LU-27 Assist property owners of rural farms in preserving those uses by providing information on conservation easements and tax credit measures. In addition, create agricultural districts as allowed by State Statutes. Rezoning to this district should occur at the request of the property owner.
- LU-28 Develop a mechanism for preserving open space resources by creating a transfer of development rights (TDR) type component for the zoning ordinance. Catawba County would need to pursue State legislative authority.
- LU-29 Protect rural character and open space by requiring dedication of open space within subdivisions.

## **SECTION II: TRANSPORTATION**

### **Guiding Principles**

- P-1 Reduce traffic congestion.
- P-2 Provide better access management.
- P-3 Establish safer roads for drivers, pedestrians and bicyclists.
- P-4 Create more aesthetically pleasing road designs.
- P-5 Maintain rural character.
- P-6 Provide a safe environment for pedestrians en route to schools, churches, etc.
- P-7 Encourage development that is pedestrian friendly.
- P-8 Establish safer roads for bicyclists.
- P-9 Provide a bicycle loop to tie in with Riverbend Park.
- P-10 Support efforts to promote and increase public transportation alternatives.
- P-11 Study connections, via the Piedmont Wagon Transit System, with the Western North Carolina Passenger Rail Service.

### **Recommendations**

- T-1 Evaluate safety and design of the following intersections:
  - .1 NC Highway 16 and St. Johns Church Road,
  - .2 C & B Farm Road and NC Highway 16,
  - .3 Sipe Road and Section House Road,
  - .4 Springs Road and County Home Road,
  - .5 Springs Road and Highway 16,
  - .6 Rock Barn Road (straighten curve at Lyle Creek).
- T-2 Evaluate the width of existing multi-lane roads to assure that the lanes are wide enough for multiple vehicles to travel side by side.
- T-3 Widen the following roads:
  - .1 Springs Road needs to be widened from the end of the five lane section to NC Highway 16;
  - .2 Widen and/or replace the bridge on Lee Cline Road at Rifle Range Road;
  - .3 Widen and/or replace the bridge on Lee Cline Road north of Houston Mill Road;
  - .4 Widen and/or replace the bridge on Snow Creek Road.
- T-4 Pursue installation of traffic signals at the intersection of Bunker Hill High School Road and Oxford School Road (see Map 7).
- T-5 Encourage traffic-calming devices, such as rumble strips, within existing subdivisions and on St. Johns Church Road.

- T-6 When NC Highway 16 and Springs Road are widened, construct a four lane divided highway with a landscaped median. In order to provide adequate access provide median breaks at least every  $\frac{3}{4}$  of a mile and at intersections with other State roads, schools and major subdivisions/developments. Landscaping should be maintained and low growing, to preserve visibility.
- T-7 Support completion of State schedule to pave remaining gravel roads.
- T-8 Require turn lanes at existing and future schools.
- T-9 Include projected traffic counts from proposed developments in addition to existing traffic when reviewing development proposals.
- T-10 Evaluate the possibility of a local scenic highway designation for the following route: beginning at the I-40 interchange with Oxford School Road, continue northwest along Oxford School Road to Riverbend Road then north along Hwy. 16 to the river. (see Map 7).
- T-11 Limit driveway cuts on major highways and encourage shared access points for both residential and commercial subdivisions and developments.
- T-12 Require sidewalks, or a comparable pedestrian/bicycle path, in new high-density housing developments (i.e. minimum 25 lots of  $\frac{1}{2}$  acre or less in size) on one side of the street. Prohibit a certificate of occupancy until the sidewalk or a performance guarantee is in place.
- T-13 Request sidewalks on State roads when they are widened. Sidewalks on the following roads could tie in with existing or planned sidewalks in Conover, Claremont and Hickory:
- .1 County Home Road,
  - .2 Rock Barn Road,
  - .3 C & B Farm Road,
  - .4 Lee Cline Road,
  - .5 St. Johns Church Road,
  - .6 NC Highway 16,
  - .7 Sipe Road.
- T-14 Provide a pedestrian crossing for St. Johns Church.
- T-15 Designate bicycle routes that tie in with existing or planned bicycle routes in Conover and Hickory.
- T-16 When roads and highways are resurfaced, widen the roads to accommodate a designated bicycle lane on the following:
- .1 NC Highway 16,
  - .2 Springs Road.

- T-17 Increase pavement width to the maximum extent feasible along the following roads for bicycle routes:
- .1 Oxford School Road,
  - .2 Riverbend Road,
  - .3 Rest Home Road,
  - .4 County Home Road.
- T-18 Publicize existing services offered by the Piedmont Wagon, especially handicap accessibility.
- T-19 Enhance visibility and quality of transit stops by adding shelters.
- T-20 Add stops closer to pockets of population (i.e. retirement communities, large developments) and destination points (i.e. airport, businesses, rental car facilities).
- T-21 Encourage the Piedmont Wagon Transit System to schedule trips to coordinate with the Western North Carolina passenger rail service.

### **SECTION III: COMMUNITY FACILITIES AND PUBLIC SERVICES**

#### **Guiding Principles**

- P-1 Plan to accommodate student enrollment growth.
- P-2 Plan for community-based schools.
- P-3 Provide adequate recreational activities for all segments of the population.
- P-4 Provide adequate open space and recreational facilities on a neighborhood basis.
- P-5 Maintain adequate level of library services for the community.
- P-6 Encourage continued cooperation with municipalities.
- P-7 Provide water and sewer services in higher density areas.
- P-8 Take a regional approach to planning of future water and sewer infrastructure.
- P-9 Maintain and expand existing levels of service.

#### **Recommendations**

- CF-1 The grouping or sharing of facilities is an effective method to reduce capital costs. When possible the sharing of facilities is encouraged.
- CF-2 A community center can serve as a focal point for people to gather and learn about the history of a community. The construction of a community center is recommended to accommodate needed meeting space and to serve as a cultural learning center.

- CF-3 Smaller community based schools should be built to promote better learning environments. High Schools should be limited to a maximum of 850 students.
- CF-4 Continue to use school facilities for public recreation activities.
- CF-5 School facility planners should consider existing county and municipal plans when selecting new school locations. New schools should be located in higher density areas as indicated on Map 5.
- CF-6 Continue to factor in available school capacity when reviewing development proposals until another school bond referendum is held. If the school bond passes, school capacity requirements in the high-density areas should be released immediately. If the school bond does not pass, school capacity requirements should still be released and other means of school funding sought.
- CF-7 The possibility of a multi-jurisdictional greenway along the Catawba River beginning at Riverbend Park and extending downstream should be examined. In addition, a trail connection should be made from the Oxford access on Lake Hickory to Riverbend Park.
- CF-8 The possibility of a midway access point, for canoeing, between Riverbend Park and the Lookout Access should be examined.
- CF-9 Active recreation parks should be constructed within the study area.
- CF-10 Continue cooperation with municipalities in providing library services.
- CF-11 Maintain existing levels of library service and increase as needed.
- CF-12 Major utility expansions in high-density areas, as indicated on Map 5, should have a priority.
- CF-13 Partner with municipalities to provide utilities that are consistent with adopted land use plans.
- CF-14 Continue to pursue Community Development Block Grants for the expansion of utilities.
- CF-15 Maintain existing levels of service.
- CF-16 The construction of an EMS base at the water tank site on NC Highway 16 is recommended.



## **SECTION IV: HOUSING**

### **Guiding Principles**

- P-1 Encourage a diverse range of housing densities and types that will meet the needs of all segments of the population, household types and income levels.
- P-2 Manufactured housing should represent a limited portion of the housing stock within the study area.
- P-3 Encourage the construction of multi-family housing as an affordable housing option.
- P-4 Development of multi-family housing should occur where appropriate public infrastructure exists.

### **Recommendations**

- H-1 Designate an area for higher-density residential uses, as shown on Map 5, *St. Stephens/Oxford SAP Proposed Density Districts*.
- H-2 Higher-density development should adhere to the following design concepts:
  - .1 Cluster development option is available;
  - .2 Single-family homes should be developed at a maximum density of 2 units per acre if public water is not available and 3 units per acre if public water is available;
  - .3 5 percent of a major subdivision should be set aside as open space.
- H-3 Designate an area for medium-density residential uses, as shown on Map 5.
- H-4 Medium-density development should adhere to the following design concepts:
  - .1 Cluster development option is available;
  - .2 Single-family homes should be developed at a maximum density of 1.34 units per acre;
  - .3 7.5 percent of a major subdivision should be set aside as open space.
- H-5 Designate an area for lower-density residential uses, as shown on Map 5.
  - .1 Cluster development option is available;
  - .2 Single-family homes should be developed at a maximum density of 1 unit per acre;
  - .3 10 percent of a major subdivision should be set aside as open space.
- H-6 Designate an area within 435 feet from the Catawba River as the Catawba River Corridor, as shown on Map 6, *St. Stephens/Oxford SAP Future Land Use Recommendations*.

- H-7 Development in the Catawba River Corridor should adhere to the following design concepts:
- .1 Cluster development option is available; however, no single lot should be smaller than 0.75 acres;
  - .2 Single-family homes should be developed at a maximum density of 1 unit per acre;
  - .3 Any water front lot should have a minimum width of 100 feet.
- H-8 Rezone the areas as shown on Map 8, *St. Stephens/Oxford SAP Proposed Zoning Map Amendments*. Existing development patterns and scenic area preservation were determining factors for the proposed Zoning Map amendments. The protection of property values and community character were important considerations in determining the areas for specified housing types (R-1, R-2, R-3 zoning).
- H-9 Amend the current Zoning Ordinance to require non-conforming manufactured homes be replaced with doublewide homes when a property owner requests to replace a home.
- H-10 To protect the property values, appearance and character of the community, the area within the Catawba River Corridor should be assigned a zoning classification of R-1. Construction of “stick built” homes has been the trend along the Catawba River Corridor and the zoning should reflect that trend.
- H-11 Encourage multi-family development, as shown on Map 6, as an affordable housing alternative.
- H-12 Multi-family development should only occur where public water and sewer is available.
- H-13 The density of multi-family development should not exceed 15 dwelling units per acre.

## **SECTION V: ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT**

### **Guiding Principles**

- P-1 Create more aesthetically pleasing developments.
- P-2 Continue to separate industrial and residential uses.
- P-3 Direct industrial growth to areas with appropriate infrastructure

### **Recommendations**

- ED-1 Commercial uses should adhere to additional appearance criteria, similar to the current US Hwy. 321 guidelines, including:

- .1 the option of either placing parking in the rear of the building with less landscaping required or placing parking in the front of the building and incorporating additional landscaping;
- .2 stronger signage regulations;
- .3 required access management;
- .4 incorporation of Conover's landscaping requirements;
- .5 buffering from residential uses.

ED-2 The following nodes should be designated Rural Commercial with a maximum total area of 10 acres per node and a maximum gross leasable area of 15,000 square feet per lot:

- .1 Lee Cline Road and Houston Mill Road;
- .2 NC Hwy. 16 and St. Peters Church Road\*;
- .3 NC Hwy. 16 and Springs Road\*;
- .4 NC Hwy. 16 and Swinging Bridge Road\*;
- .5 Oxford School Road and Riverbend Road (see Map 6).

*\* Re-examination of these areas should occur within 5 years to determine if a Neighborhood Commercial designation is warranted.*

ED-3 The following node should be designated Neighborhood Commercial with a total area of 10 to 25 acres per node and maximum gross leasable area of 50,000 square feet per lot:

- .1 St. Peters Church Road and Springs Road (see Map 6).

ED-4 The following area should be designated as a Commercial Corridor with additional standards that limit driveway cuts, require additional landscaping along the road frontage and in parking lots and limit the number, location and height of signs:

- .1 Springs Road from County Home Road west to the study area boundary (See Map 6).

ED-5 The following area should be designated as a Community Center with a total area of 20 to 40 acres per node and maximum gross leasable area of 100,000 square feet per lot. Businesses in this area should buffer structures and parking from I-40.

- .1 The interchange at I-40 and Oxford School Road (see Map 6).

ED-6 The following areas should be designated as mixed-use:

- .1 South of St. John's Church Road to the study area boundary and east to Rock Barn Road should permit mixed-use village type development;
- .2 South of Rock Barn Road to the study area boundary should permit a mix of neighborhood business and office-institutional uses (see Map 6).

- ED-7 Industrial uses should be developed in an attractive park-like setting.
- ED-8 Zone for industrial areas in park-like settings with the option to mix with heavy commercial uses.
- ED-9 The following areas should be designated for industrial uses:
- .1 South of Oxford School Road to I-40. Buildings and parking in this area should be buffered from I-40 (see Map 6)
  - .2 South of Interstate 40 and north of US Highway 70 between Rock Barn Road and North Oxford Street (see Map 6).

## **SECTION VI: NATURAL RESOURCES**

### **Guiding Principles**

- P-1 Protect water quality for future generations.
- P-2 Preserve the scenic quality of the river corridor.
- P-3 Utilize rivers for environmentally sound recreational activities.
- P-4 Preserve open space.
- P-5 Assist farmers and property owners desiring to maintain the agricultural or open space use of their property.
- P-6 Protect scenic corridors.

### **Recommendations**

- NR-1 Create scenic corridors by utilizing rivers, creeks and floodways for open space planning.
- NR-2 Create and implement design standards for recreational facilities located on the lakes and rivers to protect water quality and scenic beauty.
- NR-3 Preserve green space in undisturbed, natural states to support wildlife corridors. Clustering subdivisions is an effective tool to preserve these corridors.
- NR-4 A trail connection should be made from the Oxford access on Lake Hickory to Riverbend Park. This project would support the Mountain to the Sea Trail.
- NR-5 The St. Stephens/Oxford has one identified site as listed in the *Heritage Inventory*. Bald eagles have been seen in the Oxford area and are part of this inventory. Steps to protect resources on the Heritage Inventory are recommended.
- NR-6 Assist property owners of rural farms in preserving those uses by providing information on conservation easements and tax credit measures. In addition, create agricultural districts as allowed by State Statutes. Designation of this district should occur at the request of the property owner.

- NR-7      Develop a mechanism for preservation of open space resources by creating a transfer of development rights (TDR) type component for the zoning ordinance. Catawba County would need to pursue State legislative authority.
- NR-8      Adoption of the Watershed 10/70 provision is recommended. This option should be allowed only in the high-density, mixed use, office-institutional, and industrial areas as shown on Maps 5 and 6.
- NR-9      Protect rural character and open space by requiring dedication of open space with subdivisions. As stated in the land use section and on Map 5 major subdivisions should dedicate the following amounts of open space:
- .1      High-Density Area: 5 percent,
  - .2      Medium-Density Area: 7.5 percent,
  - .3      Low-Density Area: 10 percent.
- NR-10     To protect the water quality and scenic views designate an area within 435 feet from the Catawba River as the Catawba River Corridor, as shown on Map 5.
- NR-11     Development in the Catawba River Corridor should adhere to the following design concepts:
- .1      Cluster development option is available; however, no single lot should be smaller than 0.75 acres;
  - .2      Single-family homes should be developed at a maximum density of 1 unit per acre;
  - .3      Any water front lot should have a minimum width of 100 feet.

## **SECTION VII: CULTURAL RESOURCES**

### **Guiding Principles**

- P-1      Recognize and protect cultural resources.

### **Recommendations**

- CR-1      Bona-fide historical sites should be identified in the St. Stephens/Oxford area.
- CR-2      Provide the Catawba County Planning Department with an inventory of historically significant sites so that proposed developments on or near those sites may be flagged and encouraged to preserve the character of the area. Historically significant cemeteries and structures should be included in the inventory.
- CR-3      A community center can serve as a focal point for people to gather and learn about the history of a community. The construction of a community center is

recommended to accommodate needed meeting space and to serve as a cultural and historical learning center.